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Chairman: Mr. RATA (New Zealand)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/12 and Add.1, A/50/275-S/1995/555, A/50/413, A/50/414 and A/50/555)

1. Mr. GODFREY (Australia) said it was being increasingly recognized that women were particularly susceptible to becoming refugees, that their experience of persecution differed from that of men and that they were made vulnerable by their child-bearing and caring roles. His country had demonstrated its interest in improving the lives of women throughout the world by participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, where it had negotiated agreements to address the issues affecting refugee women. Since 1989 Australia had recognized the priority given by UNHCR to the protection of refugee women by operating a woman-at-risk programme which provided resettlement and special settlement assistance for refugee women who were alone or heads of families and who were identified as being in danger of abuse because of their gender.

2. His country regarded resettlement as an appropriate solution for refugees in circumstances where their need for protection could not be otherwise supplied. Australia's humanitarian programme was, on a per capita basis, the largest in the world, and enjoyed broad community support. It was regarded as an effective contribution to international burden-sharing. For each of the previous three years, 13,000 settlement places had been available. Anyone who arrived under the humanitarian programme was granted immediate permanent resident status and was entitled to a wide range of resettlement assistance.

3. Australia had recognized the need to provide humanitarian relief to refugees in first-asylum countries, the internally displaced and those returning to their homes by announcing an increase of more than 18 per cent in emergency and relief assistance which included a 75-per-cent increase in its core contribution to UNHCR General Programmes in the current financial year.

4. In response to the three major refugee crises, Australia had allocated a further 2,000 resettlement places to citizens of the former Yugoslavia, which made a total of 22,000 resettled; it had provided an Australian Defence Force medical contingent to work in Rwanda, as well as considerable financial support for United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the region; and it had made substantial financial contributions to the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, as well as resettling nearly 20,000 refugees under that Plan.

5. In Australia's view, the vast numbers of persons displaced or otherwise affected by conflict required mechanisms to supplement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The international community's response in the past had of necessity often been ad hoc, but it would seem reasonable to prepare some broad guiding principles for future use. He therefore suggested the use of temporary protection in situations of mass influx. However, a clear distinction should be made between such temporary protection, which would

require its own regime, and conventional refugee status. His country also supported UNHCR efforts to deal with the issue of statelessness, and urged other countries to accede to the relevant conventions and legislate to deal with the problem of statelessness.

6. Australia was actively promoting more innovative and effective approaches to emerging refugee and humanitarian problems; was willing to respond generously to humanitarian need in all forums and was committed to alleviating the plight of displaced persons and refugees, the resettlement of whom had contributed to shaping his country into a culturally diverse and tolerant nation. Australia would continue to value the positive contributions made by refugees to its society.

7. Mr. ADAWA (Kenya) said that more than a third of the world's refugee population came from Africa. New types of mass exodus were occurring, creating serious problems for both host and home countries. The root causes must be tackled on the national level, and preventive measures taken with the support of the international community. His delegation therefore supported the UNHCR call to Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide resources to rehabilitate and resettle refugees and displaced persons in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

8. Kenya was particularly concerned by the situation in neighbouring Somalia. The large influx of Somali refugees into Kenya since 1992 had had a devastating effect on the most ecologically fragile parts of the country, and there were still more than a quarter of a million Somali refugees in Kenya at the end of 1994, in addition to over 40,000 refugees from other neighbouring States. Kenya would continue its cooperation with UNHCR in the voluntary repatriation programmes to facilitate their return. However, the burden continued to weigh heavily on Kenya. He therefore called on UNHCR and the international community to speed up repatriation.

9. His delegation supported the strategic approach adopted by UNHCR in order to promote lasting solutions and to anticipate problems. His understanding was that UNHCR would continue to formulate and implement social services projects designed to cater for the needs of refugees in the affected areas of East Africa. It was important to ensure that projects intended to benefit both refugees and the local population were sustainable even after the repatriation of the refugees.

10. Mr. ABOUL-MAGD (Egypt) said that his delegation had been concerned to learn from the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/50/12 and Add.1) that 50 per cent of the world's refugee population was in Africa. He therefore appealed for additional funds to be allocated to the region.

11. With reference to voluntary repatriation, his delegation stressed that all States should honour their commitments under the relevant international instruments, and continue to receive and shelter refugees. That should not, however, be at the expense of the economy and environment of the host country, or threaten its security and stability. More support should be given to host countries, especially developing countries, in order to enable them to fulfil

their obligations to refugees while avoiding such negative internal effects. Every effort should also be made to accelerate voluntary repatriation.

12. Assistance was seriously obstructed by warring parties' use of officials, centres and supply convoys involved in humanitarian relief as a weapon in the conflict, particularly in the former Yugoslavia.

13. His delegation was extremely concerned that the thousands of people missing after the fall of the enclaves in eastern Bosnia were still not accounted for. The war crimes committed against those people made it imperative that the international community should take measures to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure that such crimes were not committed again.

14. His delegation supported the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in suggesting that the guaranteed respect by all parties for human rights should be an integral part of any peace agreement. His delegation also supported continuation of the role of UNHCR in coordinating humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia until comprehensive programmes were implemented to ensure the dignified and peaceful return and rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons.

15. Mr. DEKANY (Hungary) said that his delegation fully supported both the statement made under the item by the European Union and the High Commissioner's vision in implementing a strategy of preparedness, response and assistance.

16. He was well aware of the difficulties involved in proposing strategies to avert situations that would produce refugees, including the varying degree of international and internal consensus and of political commitment by the different parties, conflicting agendas and priorities, absence of media and public interest and donor fatigue. However, given cooperation and respect for universally accepted humanitarian principles, progress could be made.

17. Human rights violations constituted a major cause of forcible displacement, which, in turn, could pose a threat to international stability. UNHCR preventive activities were therefore of primary importance. However, Governments themselves had a responsibility to ensure full enjoyment of human rights for all under their jurisdiction. The plight of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons was a tragic reminder of the need for vigilance in detecting abuses and providing an appropriate international response. An international presence in the countries involved could assist in strengthening democratic institutions, promote dialogue and secure respect for human rights, as well as providing humanitarian assistance.

18. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming review of United Nations emergency assistance activities would produce more coordination in early-warning, quick-response and crisis-management capacity, with the political, peace-keeping, human rights and humanitarian components of United Nations operations having a mutually reinforcing role.

19. Access to victims had been increasingly difficult, owing to blatant disregard for elementary standards of humanitarian law. The civilian population had often become the main target of military campaigns, and security in refugee

camps had become fragile. While welcoming the thoughtful use of military assets by UNHCR in relief operations, and other innovative solutions, his delegation was firmly convinced that violators of humanitarian law should be held individually responsible. The existence of international tribunals should serve as an effective deterrent.

20. Voluntary repatriation was the most durable solution, and should be embedded in a broader process of post-conflict rehabilitation. The effective implementation of the UNHCR protection mandate regarding returnees remained essential in securing their reintegration and self-reliance. Reintegration activities should also encompass the restoration of the rule of law, democratic institutions and human rights guarantees. However, repatriation and resettlement should not lead to forcible changes in the traditional ethnic composition of communities or legitimize the results of ethnic cleansing.

21. As a neighbouring country, Hungary was directly affected by the humanitarian situation in the former Yugoslavia; it was giving shelter to ever-increasing numbers of asylum-seekers fleeing persecution and ethnic cleansing. It had recently become necessary to upgrade receiving facilities and infrastructure. With the prospect of peace in sight, there was hope that the process of healing the wounds left by acts of unspeakable brutality could be successful if underpinned by firm institutional and legal guarantees and adequate rehabilitation efforts. The peace agreements should have an appropriate human rights and humanitarian dimension, including the right to return and respect for minority rights, and should provide for effective monitoring mechanisms.

22. A genuinely cooperative relationship was developing between UNHCR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on both the political and operational levels. A framework had been created whereby the conflict-prevention and crisis-management capacities of OSCE had been organically linked to the humanitarian operations of UNHCR and other relief organizations. Such mutually reinforcing capacities could be further enhanced by cooperating in the creation of stable conditions to allow the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, promote the establishment of democratic institutions, strengthen the rule of law, and monitor the observance of human and minority rights.

23. Mr. ZAINUDDIN (Malaysia) said that concerned Governments and organizations must make a more coordinated effort to assist refugees, displaced persons and returnees, whose numbers had greatly increased over the past three years. It was distressing to note that women and children constituted more than 50 per cent of all refugees. UNHCR needed to collaborate closely with UNICEF, Governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations in order to increase protection and assistance to women and children refugees. Assistance should also be rendered to host countries.

24. Malaysia recognized the importance of regional arrangements in addressing the refugee problem, and supported the convening of a regional conference involving the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant

neighbouring States. Likewise, his Government recognized the importance of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees.

25. His delegation also welcomed the agreement reached to conclude activities under that Plan by the end of 1995 (A/50/12, para. 148). His Government was concerned, however, about the proposal made by UNHCR at the recent session of the Executive Committee to the effect that some transitional arrangements should be made to ensure the smooth conversion of the operation into a migration programme. It was not clear what transitional programmes were envisaged: it must be emphasized that the continued presence of Vietnamese boat people in the first-asylum countries in South-East Asia was a refugee problem; it was not a migration issue for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) UNHCR had a continuing obligation to find a lasting solution to that problem. His Government hoped that the agreement signed by Malaysia, Viet Nam and UNHCR in January 1995 (ibid., para. 143) would help solve the problem of Vietnamese boat people in Malaysia before the end of 1995, through the implementation of the orderly return programme.

26. Mr. SAKONHNINHOM (Lao People's Democratic Republic), noting that solutions were now being found to the problems of refugees in South-East Asia, said that some 24,500 Lao refugees had voluntarily returned to his country under the auspices of UNHCR. The repatriation results of 1994 and 1995 were encouraging. The Lao people were enthusiastically taking part in the development of the country, and no longer sought to leave. At the meeting among the Governments of Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic and UNHCR, held in July 1994 (ibid., para. 146), discussions had focused on efforts to finalize the repatriation of Lao by the end of 1995.

27. With the assistance of UNHCR, the European Union and friendly countries and non-governmental organizations, his Government had prepared the sites for welcoming back Lao returnees. His Government hoped that it would be able to move forward with its humanitarian repatriation programme without having to deal with political pressures, which would only delay the effort.

28. Mr. MATESIC (Croatia) said that Croatia knew all too well the problems faced by refugee-receiving countries and countries that had internally displaced persons. While his Government was grateful for the assistance provided by donor countries, charitable organizations and UNHCR, international assistance covered only 30 per cent of the needs of the refugees and displaced persons in Croatia. The Croatian Government had had to provide $370 million in assistance in 1994 alone. His Government's goal was not to compete for international assistance but to direct global attention to the wider aspects of the problem and to stress the need for burden-sharing worldwide. The international community must adopt a comprehensive approach which should include not only prevention, but also measures for addressing the root causes of migratory flows. In addition, humanitarian relief must be transformed into longer-term development projects, and equal international protection must be provided to both internally displaced persons and to refugees.

29. He wished to clarify certain policies adopted by his Government that had not been understood among certain elements in the international community. Firstly, he wished to point out that the 20,000 Bosnian Muslims from the Velika

Kladusa region of western Bosnia who had entered Croatia were members of paramilitary groups and civilians who had sided with Croatian and Bosnian Serbs in their fight against the armed forces of the Bosnian Government. In order to address the problem of those individuals, Croatia had signed an agreement with the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Turkey establishing trilateral police forces in order to facilitate their repatriation, which was currently moving forward with the assistance of UNHCR.

30. Another issue had been the Croatian Government's decision, made after the liberation of parts of north-western Bosnia and Herzegovina, to repatriate a number of Bosnian refugees who had fled to Croatia as a result of Serbian aggression. That decision had been incorrectly portrayed by some as a decision to rescind their refugee status. He wished to point out that the decision had been made in coordination with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina; that it only affected some 10,000 to 15,000 Bosnian refugees out of a total of over 208,000; that repatriation was only to occur in secure areas, and that it would be organized by a joint Bosnian-Croat committee working in coordination with UNHCR.

31. As a result of Operation Storm, Croatia had succeeded in liberating most of its occupied territories. While that development would allow for the return of many displaced persons to their homes, it had also created an exodus from Croatia of some 30,000 members of ethnic Serb paramilitary groups and 90,000 civilians who had accompanied them. It must be stressed that they had left despite pleas from the Croatian Government for them to stay, and that they had not been forced from their homes but had left in an organized manner and upon orders from their leaders. Those individuals had been subjected for several years to a steady diet of hatred towards Croatia and the Croatian people, and not a small number of them had committed crimes against Croats and other non-Serbs since 1991. The Government of Croatia understood, however, that a great many of those who had fled had not committed any crimes but had been manipulated by Belgrade, which had orchestrated the policy of creating a "Greater Serbia". Therefore, Croatia supported the return of those individuals to their homes in safety and dignity. The manner and timing of such a repatriation needed to be worked out in bilateral agreements. Croatia agreed entirely with those previous speakers who had stated that premature repatriation carried out in adverse conditions might heighten tension and even renew conflict, and that repatriation should therefore be well planned and carried out in stages.

32. The major problem to be resolved before the repatriation of ethnic Serbs to the newly liberated areas of Croatia was the issue of security. The area had been depopulated, and no local civil or security structures existed over most of the territory. That had led to a degree of lawlessness in the area. Croatia was undertaking measures to remedy the situation, which would be fully controlled once Croatian security forces no longer needed to be engaged in large-scale warfare and could concentrate on internal security instead.

33. Although Operation Storm had led to the reintegration of the major portion of the occupied territories of Croatia, the Vukovar region (Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem) still remained under Serb occupation. That region, which was vitally important to Croatia, was home to over 125,000 Croats and

other non-Serbs who had been driven from their homes in a brutal and barbaric campaign of aggression. Those individuals accounted for approximately one-half of the combined number of displaced persons in Croatia and refugees who had fled Croatia to other countries. Therefore, reintegration of that territory into the legal and political system of Croatia was indispensable if the problem of refugees and displaced persons in Croatia was to be fully resolved.

34. Mr. CARDOZO (Argentina) noted with satisfaction that during the past decade, South America had ceased to have serious refugee problems. Although a considerable number of persons still sought refuge in South America, the figure was not significant on a global scale. The difficulty being faced by his country had to do with the need to distinguish between persons migrating for economic reasons and persons who had a well-founded fear of persecution and truly qualified for refugee status.

35. He drew attention to the need to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms, within the United Nations system, for promoting human rights as a means of preventing refugee situations. It was worth while noting that the San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons addressed the key issue of harmonizing legal criteria and procedures to consolidate durable solutions. His delegation wished to express its appreciation to UNHCR and the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, as well as to the Government of Costa Rica, for their sponsorship of the colloquium which had adopted the Declaration. A number of seminars had since been held in South America with a view to improving existing legislation on refugees and strengthening the relevant national institutions.

36. South America had responded to the High Commissioner's appeal on behalf of refugees from Europe. His Government, which applied the guidelines of the Cartagena Declaration and the San José Declaration, wished to express its appreciation to UNHCR for its cooperation in providing assistance to refugees who arrived in Argentina.

37. Mrs. MARENAH-JAMMEH (Gambia) commended UNHCR for its untiring efforts and stressed the need to make all necessary resources available to the Office to enable it to carry out its operations. Of the approximately 28 million refugees and displaced persons in the world, 50 per cent were in Africa; and the majority of them were women and children, who were vulnerable to acts of violence and sexual harassment, and therefore required special protection. All States must engage in dialogue and seek peaceful solutions to their refugee problems. Respect for human rights, accountable governance, tolerance and economic development were pre-conditions for preventing such problems. African countries should make maximum use of the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in order to minimize conflict. The Gambia expressed concern at the refusal by some African States to admit refugees seeking asylum. Although a large influx of refugees caused difficulties for countries of asylum, there was a moral obligation to help them.

38. Her country, like others in the West African subregion, was not immune to the refugee problem. Owing to various types of conflict, there were approximately 10,000 refugees in the Gambia, mainly from Senegal, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Her Government had recently established a national commission to coordinate services for refugees. Five refugee camps had been set up in

different parts of the country for refugees who had not been integrated into host families. Humanitarian assistance was provided to refugees by the Government, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. Schools and skills centres had been built and jobs created to meet the needs of refugees. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration were promoted in accordance with UNHCR guidelines. Her delegation, however, did not feel that the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/50/12) adequately reflected the refugee situation in the Gambia and the efforts by the Government and people to provide assistance to the refugees, and hoped that the situation would be accurately described in the future.

39. Mr. DANESH-YAZDI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in view of the ever increasing number of refugees and displaced persons in the world, the international community must step up its efforts, through a concrete action plan, to tackle other root causes of the refugee problem, such as war, social inequality, the unbalanced international economic system and denial of the right to development. An open-ended working group made up of the member States of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme should be set up to deal with the root causes. The group could present its findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee in order to take a fresh approach in efforts to find a durable solution. The principles of international solidarity and burden-sharing obliged all members of the international community to share the responsibility of caring for and protecting refugees. The UNHCR secretariat should prepare a report about the real needs of refugees measured against the international resources actually allocated for them. The report would serve as a basis for assessing the responsibility of the international community and determining its functions.

40. All factors that forced people to leave their homelands should be analysed in a comprehensive manner in order to find practical solutions and take preventive measures, including appropriate arrangements and coordination at the regional level. Other arrangements could be made, such as greater participation by non-governmental organizations, reconstruction of economic infrastructure, more flexibility in the use of international resources on the part of host countries and encouraging voluntary repatriation as the most desirable solution.

41. Recent fighting in Afghanistan had impeded the repatriation of Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The repatriation programme for 1995 had not met its target, and there was a need to revise the proposed UNHCR General Programmes budget for 1996 to respond effectively to the needs of Afghan refugees in his country. Efforts should also be made to establish a flexible procedure for utilizing resources allocated to the repatriation programme for the purposes of care and maintenance under the General Programmes. In view of the situation in the region, he stressed the importance of preparing contingency plans to cope with further refugee flows.

42. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in spite of its economic hardships, had been host to more than 4.5 million refugees for 16 years, providing them with shelter, employment, education and health care. That situation had led to environmental degradation, reduced employment opportunities for Iranian citizens, annual expenditures of approximately $700 million for refugees, illegal transfers of foreign currency and drug trafficking. Although half of

the refugees had voluntarily returned to their countries, almost 2 1 million people from neighbouring countries were still in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was at the top of the list of host countries.

43. In spite of the limited international assistance, his Government had done its utmost to carry out its moral responsibilities. A thorough review of the proposed annual budget for his country was essential since UNHCR assistance was not commensurate with the number of refugees there or the diversity of their needs. Peace must be restored in Afghanistan in order to put an end to the suffering of its people and prevent further refugee flows. Priority should be accorded to restoring basic services in Afghanistan and rebuilding its economic infrastructure to facilitate repatriation. Preventive policies should be formulated to address the root causes. Non-governmental organizations should do much more to relieve the suffering of refugees. Moreover, a regional conference to find solutions to refugee problems in South and Central Asia should be considered seriously by the parties and countries concerned.

44. Mr. EVRIDIADES (Cyprus) stressed the need to provide special care to refugee women and children, who constituted 80 per cent of the overall number of refugees in the world, and pledged his country's continued support for measures to strengthen further the policy of UNHCR in that field. The international climate in which the Office had been established and the nature of the refugee problem had changed radically. UNHCR should, therefore, review its legal basis and adapt it to current requirements. For example, there was no international machinery to protect internally displaced persons, who were not considered refugees under the UNHCR mandate. The protection of internally displaced persons under international humanitarian law should be further codified and incorporated in an additional protocol to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR might wish to assess the nature of its humanitarian assistance and determine the conditions under which it could operate, before its humanitarian mandate was eroded under the pressure of vested interests and political exigencies.

45. It was noteworthy that the Office had begun to focus its humanitarian assistance on development and was making use of preventive diplomacy in order to get at the root causes of mass migration. Cyprus supported a concerted preventive strategy encompassing preventive diplomacy, human rights, democracy-building, social and sustained economic development, an early-warning system and disaster prevention. That strategy should also include the concept of legal deterrence which called for the punishment of those who perpetrated crimes. In that connection, his Government strongly supported the establishment of an international criminal court for human rights violators. All the agencies concerned should integrate their activities as part of a far-sighted, all-embracing prevention strategy. All countries, in a spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, had the obligation to alleviate the suffering of refugees and ensure respect for their human rights.

46. The gross human rights violations and crimes committed by Turkey in its invasion of Cyprus were well known. One of the tragic aspects of the question of Cyprus was that of the internally displaced persons, whose basic human rights, including the right to return to their ancestral homes in safety and dignity, had been denied for the past 21 years. Not a single refugee had been

allowed by the occupying Power to return home. The findings of numerous international human rights bodies had underscored the fact that the prevention by Turkey of the return of Greek Cypriot refugees to their homes in the north of Cyprus could not be justified on any grounds.

47. Cyprus expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the international community, donor countries and UNHCR in alleviating the plight of the displaced persons on both sides of the dividing line. The right of all the displaced persons to return to their homes and property was a prerequisite for a viable and just solution to the question of Cyprus. He noted with satisfaction that the problem of the refugees and their voluntary return to their homes were major issues being dealt with in the search for a solution in the former Yugoslavia. That approach should also apply in the case of Cyprus.

48. Ms. TSABEDZE (Swaziland) said that the increased scale and complexity of the refugee problem was giving rise to unprecedented challenges, making it more difficult for UNHCR to function effectively. In Africa, the refugee population currently stood at more than 7 million and there were about 5 million internally displaced persons. Large numbers of people were fleeing human rights abuses, ethnic intolerance, armed conflicts and civil strife, and the phenomenon created immense security and socio-economic burdens.

49. The peoples of southern Africa had hoped that, with the achievement of peace in their subregion, the situation would improve; but the endless wars in certain African States were once again forcing those peoples to cope with the presence of numerous refugees. Her Government would, however, honour its international and humanitarian obligations. As people often lacked valid documentation, it was desirable to adopt a coordinated approach in order to ensure that genuine asylum-seekers could be identified; possible ways of establishing their prior whereabouts and status were being considered. Also, a number of seminars had been held in southern Africa to formulate strategies for dealing with migratory movements in the region.

50. It was a humanitarian obligation to provide sanctuary in times of conflict, but however willing States might be to welcome refugees, the strain on the host country's resources might be too heavy, and foreign assistance was needed. He appealed to the international community to provide the required funds and logistic input, and praised international efforts to bring protection and relief to the victims of war, persecution and violence all over the world.

51. Mr. SCHATZER (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that the hopes of the international community that the scale of the refugee problem would diminish had not been realized. Every year, increasing numbers of people were forced to seek refuge from violence and persecution. Such tragic developments multiplied the challenges facing IOM, an organization with particularly close ties to UNHCR, in its efforts to relieve human misery and to help people to return to a normal life. Those problems, transcending the capacities of any single organization, also served to underscore the need for even more timely coordination and more equitable burden-sharing. States and organizations must endeavour to create conditions conducive to reducing and eliminating the pressures which caused refugee flows. IOM was continuing to

develop and upgrade its skills in order to support the international community's efforts to assist the victims of humanitarian crises.

52. Member and observer States of IOM were using a newly devised process of strategic planning to affirm and strengthen the organization's role in dealing with the operational challenges of migration, increasing emphasis on better understanding of migration issues, encouraging social and economic development, and working to ensure the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

53. He gave examples of the close, constructive cooperation between UNHCR and IOM in joint operations carried out recently by the two organizations. Those included the return of 67,000 Afghans from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan, and assistance to 400,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in the Great Lakes region of Africa. In post-emergency situations, a group which often became a major liability and risk to the precarious peace process was that of soldiers who had to be demobilized and prepared for reintegration into civil society; that task posed formidable challenges to be addressed jointly with the United Nations system and other concerned parties. Experience gained in such operations in Mozambique and Haiti was evaluated, and would be useful in other instances such as Angola and Liberia. The return of qualified nationals to participate in reconstruction in their home countries was another milestone on the road to normalization, and IOM programmes to encourage that return had played an important role in a number of countries, including Rwanda. While such programmes could not initiate peace, they could help cement it.

54. The aftermath of conflict sometimes lasted for decades, as in the case of some 40,000 screened-out asylum-seekers in South-East Asia. IOM, UNHCR and concerned Governments were currently looking for solutions to that remaining element of a crisis that had changed from a larger refugee crisis to a smaller, but still difficult, migration challenge.

55. A comprehensive approach to migration also involved issues of prevention of irregular flows in those cases where no specific protection concerns prevailed. Realistic, credible information activities in countries of origin about conditions in countries of intended destination, as well as risks and options, offered another opportunity for UNHCR and IOM to work together.

56. Organizations had to be selective as to their involvement, and be willing to desist in situations where other partners were better placed to provide assistance. Complementarity and a cooperative and innovative approach could, however, produce results that could not be achieved by a single actor, as in the Commonwealth of Independent States, where UNHCR, OSCE and IOM had come together to assist Governments in developing effective approaches to problems in the region.

57. Mr. MWAKAWAGO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation regretted the continuing deterioration of the refugee situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa; refugees from Rwanda and Burundi continued to flee into neighbouring countries, and the United Republic of Tanzania was currently host to more than one million refugees. That constituted a severe strain on the country's Government, people and social infrastructure. The United Republic of Tanzania had traditionally welcomed refugees from African countries, and the

Government had seen to it that those people fleeing from atrocities had been well received and humanely treated. Many had even been granted Tanzanian citizenship. However, the country's resources and generosity had been stretched to the limit, repatriation efforts had not been very successful, and the crisis had reached alarming proportions. Rwanda and Burundi must create an environment conducive to the safe and secure return of their citizens, otherwise seeds of conflict and mistrust would be sown in the region.

58. His Government's measures to secure its borders with Burundi must be seen in that context; they were intended to ensure that an already bad situation was not made worse by a new wave of refugees. Due attention should be paid to problems facing countries of asylum; in the case of the United Republic of Tanzania, not only had the situation led to ecological imbalance and disruptions of infrastructure and social services, but there had even been military incursions from neighbouring countries, allegedly in hot pursuit of guerrilla fighters.

59. What was required was the repatriation of the refugees, together with measures to contain any recurrence of the causes of displacement. National reconciliation, power-sharing and tolerance must be fostered, with commensurate support from the international community. Law and order, respect for human rights, and mutual trust among Governments must be restored as a matter of urgency, to avert the danger of a new crisis.

60. His Government did not for one moment belittle the tragic events of 1994. To assist in the search for a durable solution, it had provided facilities for the setting up of the headquarters of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, and was willing to participate in the task of separating those guilty of genocide from genuine refugees, which could not be done by the countries of asylum alone, but was feasible with the active support of the authorities in Rwanda. His Government looked forward to continuing close cooperation with UNHCR in addressing the problems of the region.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.